

CAHRnews

Centre for Applied Human Rights newsletter

Dear Friends,

This spring and summer CAHR has continued to expand its research into transformative justice in the Middle East and held its first workshop in the research project that is examining and analysing the security management practices of human rights defenders (HRDs) at risk. In June CAHR staff ran a short course in Geneva on the practice and ethics of refugee legal aid.

We have also hosted a group of 6 Politics undergraduate students who conducted interviews with former fellows of CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme for HRDs at Risk on what they have done since the fellowship. You can read their report in this edition of CAHRnews.

We are also reaching out to alumni – the CAHR Alumni Platform is looking for active professionals to take it over!

Finally, with the new academic year approaching, we are looking forward to welcoming new students and visiting fellows for the 2014/15 academic year. We hope you will follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to find out more about our events in the coming year.

Sanna Eriksson
Centre Co-ordinator
CAHR

RESEARCH



CAHR secures major research grant to support participatory transitional justice process in Tunisia

CAHR is delighted to have secured a major, two-year research grant (€260,000) from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research programme on Security and Rule of Law in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings.

The research project is entitled 'A Transitional Justice Barometer: Measuring the Needs for and Impact of Transitional Justice Processes in Tunisia'. To ensure human security and rule of law in Tunisia demands transitional justice mechanisms that address the aspirations of the Tunisian people. This project will build research capacity in Tunisia that will enable Tunisians from a wide range of backgrounds to articulate their aspirations for the transition to the authorities and increase their participation in transitional justice processes.

The project will build and train a research unit within a Tunisian NGO, Al Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center (KADEM), using the expertise of CAHR and Impunity Watch. It will additionally train peer researchers from among communities most affected by historical violations, so that they can both contribute to knowledge production around the transition and support the participation of their communities in the process. Research will be both qualitative and quantitative, focusing on the needs of a wide range of victims and stakeholders, and understanding the impact of unfolding transitional justice mechanisms on them as well as their capacity to participate in the mechanisms.

The project will constitute a barometer of the performance of the transitional justice process, permitting a longitudinal understanding of the impact of transitional justice in Tunisia. This is an action research project that seeks both to produce knowledge that can inform global understandings of a victim-centred, participatory transitional justice process, while actively impacting the process in Tunisia.

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

Advocacy, training and alumni in Geneva

The Centre was active in June in Geneva! Building on our successful launch there of our research on HRDs during the Human Rights Council in March, the Centre held a short-course on the practice and ethics of refugee legal aid. Organised with Asylum Access, one of the largest legal aid organisations in the Global South, the short-course provided a forum for more than 30 practitioners from more than two dozen jurisdictions to discuss and learn about the provision of legal services to refugees.

While in Geneva, Martin Jones of the Centre also addressed the Middle East regional plenary of UNHCR's Annual Consultations with NGOs about the situation of Syrian refugees in Egypt and spoke about the challenges of strategic litigation on refugee issues in Egypt at an expert workshop on strategic litigation held after the Annual Consultations. UNHCR's Annual Consultations are the largest gathering of NGOs working on refugee issues in the world, drawing more than 350 representatives from 200 organizations working in almost every country in the world. During his busy time in Geneva, Martin also had a chance to meet with former Centre students now conducting human rights advocacy in Geneva!



@ the UN in Geneva: Martin Jones with Mohamed Bayoumi & Mohamed Farahat of the Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights

HRDs: UG @work project report

After the Protective Fellowship

Every summer the University's Politics Department places undergraduate students on short placements within the University and in local organisations. This year, in May-June 2014, CAHR hosted 6 Politics undergraduate students on a "UG@work" project. Bethany Dunning, Maria Fazio, Simen Grinden, Molly Hood, Isabel Pearson, and Selina Pope conducted interviews

with former CAHR visiting fellows from 2008-2013 to find out what the impact of the Protective Fellowship Scheme had been on the continued human rights work of the human rights defenders (HRDs). The students spoke to Jitman Basnet from Nepal, Karak Denyok from South Sudan, Rhoda Gbla from Sierra Leone, Saifora Khan from Afghanistan, Diana Makembaeva from Kyrgyzstan, Nagi Musa from Sudan, Njoroge Njenga from Kenya, and Guleid Osman from Somaliland. Looking at three core aspects of the fellowship – education, networking and safety – this is what they found out.



Nagi Musa

Before, I was involved in chaos, not knowing what to do or how to plan in or out of Sudan, but when I went to York this all became clear.

Nagi Musa, 2013



Saifora Khan

Learning new skills

A core part of the Fellowship scheme at York is its educational aspect. By educating the defenders on their international rights as human rights defenders, CAHR is equipping them with the tools they will need to continue their work both safely and efficiently. The fellowship includes lectures, seminars and workshops covering the different skills and knowledge needed in defending human rights. However, the main benefit of the educational aspect of the Fellowship Scheme for many fellows has been the project that all defenders are required to write during their stay in York. The aim of this is that once defenders leave York they are able to implement a project that benefits their own local community.

Diana Makembaeva from Kyrgyzstan not only completed her project comparing the Kyrgyz and German parliamentary sys-

tems within a couple of months of leaving York, but is currently in the process of implementing her second project aiming to encourage Kyrgyz youth in advocating for human rights in Kyrgyzstan by giving them a medium through which they can come together. Diana found the project-writing part of the programme beneficial as it allows defenders to become familiar with the method of project writing and so they can go on to create more projects later. Similarly, York gave Jitman Basnet the opportunity to materialise his idea of the Mobile School of Human Rights to a level that he could put into practice once returning to Nepal. His work has heavily impacted the community in Nepal and reached directly 100 and indirectly 200 people. Jitman has now taken this project across the Pacific to the USA where he has continued talking on human rights in universities, local communities and faith-based organisations, reaching up to 1,200 people.

Rest and safety (continued)

Another main benefit of the Fellowship is that it provides respite and safety for HRDs who work in environments that may be strenuous or life threatening. In order to allow a continuation of human rights activism it is important for the HRDs to have time away to reflect on their experiences and to have a break, while gaining skills and contacts. The individual can then interact with other defenders who may have experienced similar difficulties while being from different and diverse backgrounds.

Njoroge Nienga applied to the scheme for the reprieve it provided. His work in Kenya had brought about psychological and emotional stress which can be traumatising. Njoroge's time in York thus brought the relief needed for him to continue on with his activism, enhanced by other defenders and masters students that he worked with. The important factor being that he was not alone, and that what he was doing was right.

For many defenders, the idea that what they are doing is important is vital for a continuation of human rights activism, even though their government can deem their activities criminal. York provides this by becoming a sanctuary for HRDs. Nagi Musa, an advocate of peaceful change in Sudan, stated that one of the main reasons that his time at York helped him, was that it was a chance for him to "calm down and relax," – a time for him to think about the future without the pressure of being arrested, or having documents and laptops taken away from him at any given moment. "It really helped me a lot to plan for my future." He told us. "Before, I was involved in chaos, not knowing what to do or how to plan in or out of Sudan, but when I went to York this all became clear." Being in York,

Nagi could really focus on the work he was planning to do back in Sudan, so that his efforts would result in even more success. But perhaps most importantly of all, Nagi was completely safe and free from fear for his wellbeing during his time at York.

Networking – within York and internationally

A noticeable topic that many of the defenders mentioned was the ability to network and learn from the other defenders they shared their experience in York with. Saifora Khan who works for women's rights in Afghanistan said that she learnt a lot from the experiences the other defenders had gone through, which she could not only relate to her own but also allowed her to develop her own response to issues she faces. Moreover, due to the plurality of human rights issues and places represented, Saifora and many of the other defenders who were interviewed highlighted how much they learnt about the situation in other countries.

Guleid Osman from Somaliland mentioned that the mechanisms used by human rights defenders that he studied at York helped him overcome the problems he faces in Somaliland. To now know the language of basic human rights allows him and the other defenders a certain legitimacy recognised by the international community. When a defender is able to relate an issue back to a lack of basic human rights in a specific area for a specific group of people, as they were taught to do during their time in York, it makes the issue identifiable to organisations at the international level. This knowledge has allowed Guleid and others the ability to grow and develop the work they do at the international level.

Written by: B. Dunning, M. Fazio, M. Hood, I. Pearson & S. Pope



ACTIVATING THE CAHR ALUMNI PLATFORM!

CAHR launched its online Alumni Platform for alumni of the MA in Applied Human Rights and LLM in International Human Rights Law & Practice programmes in spring 2014. An active Alumni Platform benefits all its members by helping human rights professionals stay in touch with each other and in facilitating employment opportunities in the field of human rights.

We are now looking for a group of 2-4 alumni who would be interested in taking over the administration of the Alumni Platform. This involves regular updating of posts relating to employment, conferences, recent developments in the field, etc., as well as promoting the platform to alumni who are not yet there.

If you are interested in the posts or do not yet have access to the platform, please contact Sanna Eriksson (sanna.eriksson@york.ac.uk)

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